

Philippians 1

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[0 : 00] And please turn back in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 1, which you'll find on page 980.

! Philippians probably accounts for a pretty high percentage of people's favourite Bible verses. It's full of really helpful, pithy one-liners. And I'm afraid I can almost guarantee we won't be covering your favourite verse in detail. We're going to have to take a really broad, rush approach to it. Now, think back with me to your school days. I don't know how exactly things worked at your school. But when I was in school, we were given different kinds of work to do.

Sometimes we were given work to do in class, sitting quietly on our own, doing our work. Sometimes we were given homework to do. And sometimes we were given big projects to do at home, or for our parents to not really do at home.

[1 : 20] And sometimes we were given projects to do as groups. And I suspect that most of us think of the Christian life either as homework, or maybe classwork that we do on our own, but quietly in the classroom.

So we come to church and we do the work, but we just kind of sit quietly on our own. We might be all together, but we just get on with our own thing. And maybe sometimes help each other. But it's up to each one of us to get on with it. And actually the culture around us backs up that idea quite strongly. More and more, especially in the West, the past few centuries, we are encouraged to think that our faith is a private thing.

It's just an added, personal, private thing that you choose. And it has nothing really to do with your everyday life in the world.

It is a private matter. And my hope is that as we spend these couple of weeks walking through Philippians together, that kind of thinking will be smashed to smithereens. Paul is going to teach us that the Christian life is very much a group project.

[2 : 34] coming to church is a group project. The teaching that Paul is going to give us here is something for us to learn together.

And to digest together. And to apply together. So let me just ask you to take a moment to look around you. Look at the people either side of you.

Give them a polite British nod. So that we all acknowledge that we are here to listen to God. Not just as individuals. Me with my notebook.

But me with my brothers and sisters. Us together. And I say this because that is particularly what Paul wants for the Philippians. He is writing to IPC Philippi.

This church that he loves dearly. And with which he actually has a really warm relationship. It's quite rare for one of Paul's letters for that to be the case. And his great concern is for them to be more and more united.

[3 : 36] And even as he opens the letter, he lays down the groundwork for that. Can you see that with me? He writes to all the saints in verse 1. Prays for all of them in verse 4.

He feels confident about all of them in verse 7. And they are all his fellow partakers of grace again in verse 7. And he earns for all of them in verse 8. He is speaking to them all together.

He thinks of them as a unit. And he wants them to be all the more united. And not just united by the fact that they meet together every Sunday.

That they are in the same building. He wants them to be united the way a building is united. Or the way a body is united. Or the way a family should be united.

United in love. That is his prayer for them in verse 9. It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more. With knowledge and all discernment.

[4 : 35] So that you may approve what is excellent. And so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.

To the glory and praise of God. Here is what Paul wants. For IBC Philippi. He wants them to grow in love. For their love for one another to abound more and more.

And he wants their love to abound in a particular way. How does he want their love to abound? In verse 9. With knowledge and all discernment.

He wants their love to grow as they learn together. As they figure things out together. Not just that they learn on their own and then love.

But they grow in love as they grow in knowledge and discernment. As they grow together in their ability. Look at verse 10. To test or prove what is excellent.

[5 : 39] John Calvin actually calls that the definition of Christian wisdom. From verse 10. That's the definition. To know what is advantageous or expedient.

Not to torture the mind with empty subtleties and speculations. It's growing together in knowledge and discernment. In order to approve what is excellent.

So even when you're studying and learning from your Bible on your own. As you read your Bible. As you read good books. You are learning as a member of the church. With the goal of helping your brothers and sisters.

To grow and discern what is best. To figure things out like that. We learn and grow. To use Peter's language. As living stones. As parts of a building.

And the goal of that learning then. Is that it informs. And then reforms how they live. He's teaching them this crucial pattern.

[6 : 40] Of Christian growth. Which starts with the head. And always goes on to the heart. And always goes on to the hands. And their love will abound. As they go through that process together.

From head to heart. To hand. If you meet someone. Who's got all their theological T's crossed. And I's dotted. That is particularly loving.

And they are out there. Then you know how you should pray for that person. And you should pray for that person. But also if you meet someone. Who thinks that learning doctrine.

And growing in understanding. And studying the Bible. And theology. Isn't important. Just for the frozen chosen. And they just want to get on with doing. And serving.

And loving people. Then you know how to pray for them. And you should pray for them. And the church has understood this for centuries. The church father. From the early centuries.

[7 : 39] Chrysostom. He says on this section. He's not speaking here. Of a kind of virtue. That tries hopelessly. To grow without Christ. It's growing as we know Christ.

The Christian learning. And the Christian loving. Go hand in hand. To produce the Christian living. And throughout this book.

Paul is going to offer himself. And others. As examples of this pattern. For the Philippians. And for us in turn. To imitate. Now that's a key thing I've learned from Philippians in the past.

That a major part of growing in godliness. Sanctification. Is simply finding someone godly. And imitating them. That there is no copyright infringement involved.

When you copy someone's godliness. That if you see someone do something godly. By all means go ahead and copy that. And if they complain. Tell them the Bible told you to do it.

[8 : 41] And here in chapter 1. Paul shows them an example. Based on the current circumstances. That he's facing. So just to bring you up to speed with where Paul is. He has been imprisoned.

You've seen references to his chains. He's probably under house arrest. We're not told where. It seems to be either Rome or Ephesus. And the scholars will argue over which one. I kind of lean towards Ephesus.

But it doesn't really matter. And while he's been imprisoned. He's had a few extra things to deal with on top of that. As we see in verse 14. That the news of Paul's imprisonment. Inspired a load of people.

To go around preaching the gospel. And while some of them were good. Gospel hearted people. Doing the work that Paul couldn't do. There were quite a few others. Thinking good riddance.

I had enough of that Paul. And here at last is a chance. For me to get a few of my own converts. Of my own. About time somebody else had a go. So weirdly.

[9 : 39] They are preaching the gospel. But they're doing it to make Paul jealous. They want him to feel even worse. About the fact that he's locked up. So Paul is facing problems.

From the authorities. And facing problems from these petty preachers. And he's also thinking realistically. About the very real possibility. That he might die soon.

All in all. Paul is facing a lot of intense. Pressure from all around. But Paul has grown in love. With knowledge and all discernment.

And that has enabled him. To discern what is best. And to approve of what is excellent. And to respond in a godly way. To all of this. And he wants to teach the Philippians. How to do that. So he tells IPC Philippi. Here is first what you need to know. Then what you need to figure out. And then what you need to do. What you need to know.

[10:37] What you need to figure out. What you need to do. So first then. What you need to do. Or to know. Sorry. Here in chapter 1. You'll see throughout.

That Paul is absolutely confident. Of one thing. Can you see what it is? Verse 6. He's sure that God who began a good work in them.

Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. And he mentions that day of Christ again in verse 10. In verse 19. He knows that the end result of all he's going through.

Is deliverance. Or salvation. Not thinking necessarily of his salvation from his chains. But the final salvation. He's actually quoting here from the Greek translation of Job 13.16.

Which reads. This will be my salvation. That the godless shall not come before him. In the Greek it says. This will turn out for my salvation. Paul uses that phrase. He's thinking of the godless not coming before God.

[11:36] He's thinking of the victory of God. Specifically the victory of Christ. Christ. Verse 20. He speaks of his eager expectation. And hope. Which in Paul are not the I hope so kind of hope.

But the I know so kind of hope. Verse 28. He speaks of their unity being a clear sign. Or proof of coming destruction.

And salvation. So what does Paul know? What is he sure of? Well he is absolutely sure. Of what's to come in the future. And what is to come?

Salvation. As we've seen. God's people vindicated. And the godless punished. Christ magnified. Christ honoured.

What's coming is Christ's day. The future is all about Christ. That's what Paul knows. And what he wants the Philippians to know.

[12:38] He wants them to get it. Not just into their heads. But into their bones. That their chief end. Is to glorify God. And enjoy him forever.

Christ is what their lives. Are all about. When the end of this age. Comes. The words that roll up. On the screen. Won't say the end.

But Christ. Christ. It won't be a generic. And they all lived happily ever after. But specifically. Christ was honoured. And creation was overjoyed.

Paul knows. That final salvation. Is coming. These godless people. Who seek to create. And add to our misery. Will not come before him.

But the godly will. Christ's people. Will. That is what you need. To know. The day of Christ. Is coming. And it is all about. Him.

[13:38] The good work. That he started in you. Will be completed. And all to his. Glory. Get that. In your bones. Not just your individual bones.

But in your collective bones. As a body. Look around you again. Look at the people. Who you need to know this. With. With. These are the people.

That you know. This truth with. That sometimes. When we take the Lord's Supper. As we're having fellowship together. With Christ. What we. We do this thing. We call. Proclaiming the mystery.

Of our faith. I used to attend the church. But we did this every time. We took the Lord's Supper. After we'd taken the supper. We'd all say. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

That is the mystery. We profess. Actually. Let's all do that now. Don't just say it. But listen to everybody else around you. Saying it. Let's say it together. Christ has died.

[14:34] Christ has risen. Christ will come again. Ready? Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. Brothers and sisters.

Know that to be true. And brothers and sisters. Look around. And see all the people. Who believe it. With you. We are here to know.

And believe that. Together. So that's what you need to know. So we move on secondly. To what you need to figure out. What you need to figure out.

What excellent thing. Do you need to discern. Or approve of. Based on what you know. Well here's what Paul discerned. First from verse 12.

Even though I'm locked up. The people I'm locked up with. Are hearing about Jesus. In verse 13. He says. It has become known.

[15:33] Throughout the whole imperial guard. And to all the rest. That my imprisonment. Is for Christ. Sure he says. I'm in chains. But Christ.

Is being honoured. People are hearing. About Jesus. Then from verse 14. My imprisonment. Has resulted. In even more people. Boldly. Proclaiming. Christ. You'd think it would produce. The opposite wouldn't you. Someone went to jail for it. So I'll stop.

But no. There are even more people. Preaching Christ now. Some people. Because they love Paul. Verse 16. But even those. Mean spirited ones.

Who preach. Out of their own. Selfish ambition. Who preach. Despite me. They are still. Preaching Christ. They're not preaching lies.

[16:26] They are preaching Christ. And so Paul says. While I am sure. Of the coming salvation. Sure that the godless. Will not come before him. Christ is still being preached.

The Lord uses. Unworthy sinners. To make Christ known. Every single day. The fact that these ones. Are being unworthy sinners. Deliberately. Isn't going to stop him.

Christ is proclaimed. And in that. I rejoice. Verse 18. Then he moves on. To the even heavier issue. Of the fact that he might die. What does he figure out.

About that. Based on what he knows. He figures out. In verse 20. That Christ. Will be honored. In my body. Whether by life. Or by death. If I live.

I can use this body. To preach Christ. If I die. I'll be using this body. To show that Christ. Is worth dying for. And so that. Wonderfully famous verse.

[17:26] Verse 21. To live. Is Christ. To die. Is gain. What matters. Is Christ's victory. Which is already. Guaranteed.

Explains in verse 23. It matters so little. Whether he lives. Or dies. He'd much rather depart. And be with Christ. But if not. He knows he can be really useful. For the sake of the Philippians.

And for others I'm sure. So not only can they rejoice. In the coming final day. They can also rejoice. In seeing Paul. Coming to see them again. Verse 26.

This is what he figured out. Prison. Or freedom. Life. Or death. Whichever one you go with.

Christ's honour. Does not even get a scratch. It is guaranteed. Either way. Christ will be honoured. Should he worry. About whether or not.

[18:24] He gets released. No. Christ will be glorified. Either way. Should he worry. About whether he lives or dies. No. Christ will be glorified.

Either way. Are suffering and death. Good things in themselves. Absolutely not. But is suffering for Christ. A great privilege. Yes.

Because Christ is honoured. And so we see in verse 29. It has been granted to you. That for the sake of Christ. You should not only believe in him. But also suffer for his sake.

It's a privilege to honour Christ. Even through suffering and death. Now would it be appropriate for them. To pray for Paul's release. And for him to be spared death.

Yes of course it would. That is just part of loving our neighbour. And he will thank them later on in the letter. For caring for him. And sending help.

[19:25] But is it the end of the world. If God says no to that prayer. In this case. No it's not. So what we figure out. Is that the main thing. The most important thing.

The priority. Is not improving my circumstances. Nothing wrong with seeking better circumstances. But it is never our priority. Our priority.

Is always. The honour and glory of Christ. So. Now we know what we should know. And. We've seen what we should figure out.

So what does that. All that push us. To do. Thirdly and finally. What Paul tells them. What you need. To do. Verse 27.

Let your manner of life. Be worthy. Of the gospel of Christ. That word for. Let your manner of life. It's a tricky one. On the one hand.

[20:20] It can mean. Behave in a certain way. Conduct yourself in a certain way. But it's also got. A connotation of. Acting the way. A citizen of a certain place. Should behave.

So the recently. Redone Christian Standard Bible. Tries to include. That connotation. By elaborating on it. Quite a bit. They say. As Christians. As citizens of heaven. Live your life.

Worthy. Of the gospel of Christ. It's not explicitly there. But it is. At least. What it's implied. What it's implied. By using that word. It may well be.

He's alluding to some. Older Jewish writings. That spoke of. Of how an Israelite. Should live. So as to say. He's. By using this word. He's saying. You are now truly. God's covenant people.

And this is how. God's covenant people. Should live. And that theme. Will be important. In chapter three. But he's at least. Saying for now. Live the way. A covenant. Community member.

[21 : 17] A gospel community member. Ought to live. And what does that look like. The end of verse 27. Standing firm. In one spirit.

With one mind. Striving side by side. For the faith. For the gospel. For the gospel. And not frightened. In anything. By your opponents. The people.

Of the good news of Christ. Stand firm. Together. In one spirit. We are to stand firm. Together. In one spirit. We are to strive.

Side by side. Together. For the faith. Of the gospel. God's people. God's people. Help each other. To keep believing. Keep confessing the faith. They help each other.

Understand it better. And grow more confident. In it. And they stand firm. In the face. Of opposition. And they don't just.

[22 : 16] Stand firm. On their own. They stand firm. Together. United. Back home in Wales. There's a joke. That what we call. A semi-detached house. There's two houses.

On their own. Together. But we simply. Stand. Together. God's people. Encourage one another. Helping each other. Not to be frightened.

By opponents. And it's not just. By telling each other. To stop worrying. And cheer up. We help them. Meditate on the reasons. We have. For confidence.

That Christ will. Absolutely. Definitely. Be honoured. And we help them. Thank. And praise God. For that. Guaranteed. Truth. A church.

That does that. And stands. In that pressure. Will stand. As sure proof. To anyone. Who opposes her. That they face. God's judgment. Verse 28.

[23 : 11] There's also a sign. There's also a sign. For believers. That God. Who began. That good work. Is still doing. That good work.

For the day. Of completion. And salvation. And so. They stand united. With the one. Holy. Catholic. And apostolic. Church.

Verse 29. And 30. You see. They had the same. Privilege. The same. Faith. The same. Suffering. The same. Conflict. As their brother. Paul.

Who was far away. And imprisoned. Part of that one. Global church. Church. This is what we do. Given that Christ. Will one day. Be fully. And completely.

Honoured. The true church. Who knows. What Paul knows. Who figures out. What Paul figured out. And does what Paul does.

[24 : 07] Is the one that sings. With Luther. In a mighty fortress. And though this world. With devils. Filled. Should threaten. To undo us. We will not. Fear.

For God. Has willed. His truth. To triumph. Through us. The prince. Of darkness. Grim. We tremble. Not for him. His rage. We can endure.

For lo. His doom. Is sure. One little. Word. Shall fell him. That word. Above all.

Earthly powers. No thanks to them. Abideth. The spirit. And the gifts. Are ours. Through him. Who with us. Sideth. Let goods.

And kindred go. This mortal life. Also. The body. They may kill. God's truth. Abideth still. His kingdom. Is. Forever.

[25 : 02] That is what we know. What we sing. What we figure out. And what we do. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Thank you.